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**PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERS CELEBRATE PROTECTION OF PARCEL AT
CURZON MILL ROAD IN NEWBURYPORT**

Today, officials from the City of Newburyport, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA), state legislators, and area residents celebrated the permanent protection of the historic Curzon Mill Road property in Newburyport. This 5.8-acre parcel of land adjacent to Maudslay State Park has been protected from development and preserved as public open space through a partnership between the City, the DCR and the ECGA.

“The purchase of this historic property along the scenic byway known as Curzon Mill Road illustrates a strong bond between state and local government and private citizens to maintain significant open space in the City of Newburyport,” said Mayor John F. Moak.

The campaign to conserve the property began after the parcel went under agreement for residential development in 2004. In recognition of the property’s important ecological, scenic and historic qualities, the Newburyport City Council voted to exercise a right of first refusal it held on the property and purchased the land for \$395,000. A portion of the money used for the purchase (\$120,000) was a short-term loan from the city’s Stabilization Fund. The balance of the purchase price came from Newburyport’s Community Preservation Fund, marking the first time that the fund had been tapped for an open space purchase.

Initially, the City Council planned to subdivide the parcel and sell one building lot as a means of reimbursing the Stabilization Fund. Local open space advocates were in favor of conserving the entire parcel, and contacted the Essex County Greenbelt Association for assistance. Greenbelt’s land conservation staff then worked together with those citizens to persuade the City Council to defer the sale until all conservation options had been exhausted. The City Council gave the effort a deadline of November 1, 2005 to raise the \$120,000.

Greenbelt worked to secure a \$60,000 commitment from DCR (the managers of Maudslay State Park) towards the project. Greenbelt also worked closely with local open space advocates on a private fundraising campaign to raise the remaining \$60,000. Greenbelt launched this campaign with a \$5,000 commitment towards the project.

“From beginning to end, this project has been a great example of how many important land conservation projects are achieved through collaboration with local and state partners,” said Essex County Greenbelt’s Director of Land Conservation David Santomenna.

One of the few privately-owned undeveloped parcels along scenic Curzon Mill Road, the forested land abuts Maudslay State Park on three sides and contains important wildlife habitat along the banks of the Artichoke River. It is also part of the historic landscape associated with the 18th century Curzon Mill itself, and was identified by many Newburyport residents as an important local landmark in 2004’s *Heritage Landscape Plan*, which was completed with DCR’s assistance. Now that the land is permanently protected, it will continue to be owned by the City, and be managed by DCR staff consistent with the surrounding state park.

“Protecting this property was critical for maintaining the historic character of Curzon Mill Road, which runs through DCR’s Maudslay State Park. This acquisition will ensure that no incompatible development encroaches on DCR’s Coachman’s House and Barn,” said DCR Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington. “As development pressures continue to grow it is critical that we all work together in partnership to preserve the most important remaining lands for conservation and recreation across our Commonwealth.”

“While some cities and towns are devoted to development for its own sake, Newburyport is devoted to developing community,” commented Senator Steven Baddour. “Not only is the land at Curzon Mill a habitat for a variety of plants and animals, it is also among Newburyport’s scenic landscapes and has not been disturbed in over a century. Though developing the land might generate revenue, the plot itself is of much greater value to future generations of Newburyport residents.”

“When this land first became available, I remember meeting with the Environmental Affairs Secretary’s office about a possible acquisition,” State Representative Michael Costello said. “I’m happy I was at the forefront of the partnership between the state and the city that ultimately lead to this purchase. I thank Commissioner Burrington for his continued commitment to preserving open space, especially to secure the future of a place as beautiful as Maudslay State Park.”

“We’re delighted to have everyone come together to celebrate the protection of this lovely, historic part of the city,” said Mary Harbaugh, chair of the Newburyport Open Space Committee. “We’re also celebrating an amazing array of supporters, from donors big and small to local committees to state officials to Essex County Greenbelt. Because Newburyport voters got behind the Community Preservation Act, which was crucial to the project, residents deserve a chance to raise a glass of lemonade and enjoy our success.”

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